

We claim:

- 1 1. A method for providing a reward to a bidder participating in an auction, the
 2 method comprising:
 3 identifying a product subject to bidding during an auction session;
 4 receiving a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction session;
 5 determining, based on a reward rule, whether the bidder is qualified to receive
 6 a reward, and if the bidder is qualified:
 7 transmitting, to the bidder, an indication that the bidder is qualified to
 8 receive the reward.

- 1 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 2 determining, based on the bid, whether the bidder is qualified to receive the
 3 product; and if the bidder is qualified:
 4 transmitting to the bidder, an indication that the bidder is qualified to
 5 receive the product.

- 1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of determining, based on the bid,
 2 whether the bidder is qualified to receive the product, further comprises:
 3 determining whether the bid is greater than each of a plurality of remaining
 4 bids.

- 1 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the reward comprises at least one of:
 2 a value of currency, a supplement to the bid, a rebate on the product, an
 3 amount of frequent flier miles, a second product, and a warranty for the product.

- 1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the reward rule comprises a condition that the
 2 bidder accept an offer provided by a third party.

- 1 6. The method of claim 5, further comprising:
 2 transmitting, before the determining step, an offer to the bidder for a second
 3 product provided by the third party;
 4 receiving an acceptance of the offer from the bidder; whereby the bidder is
 5 qualified to receive the reward.

- 1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein the second product is a service.
- 1 8. The method of claim 7, wherein the service is a credit card account and
2 wherein the third party is a credit card provider.
- 1 9. The method of claim 6, wherein the reward is a supplement to the bid, the
2 supplement including a value of currency.
- 1 10. The method of claim 5, further comprising:
2 determining whether the bidder has an acceptable credit history before the
3 offer is transmitted to the bidder.
- 1 11. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 receiving at least one bid for the product from each of a plurality of remaining
3 bidders.
- 1 12. The method of claim 11, wherein the step of receiving at least one bid is
2 performed prior to the step of receiving the bid.
- 1 13. The method of claim 12, wherein the reward includes a condition that the bid
2 from the bidder is greater than each bid received from the plurality of remaining
3 bidders.
- 1 14. The method of claim 12, further comprising:
2 determining which of the at least one bids is a greatest bid.
- 1 15. The method of claim 14, wherein the reward rule comprises a condition that
2 the bid from the bidder is greater than the greatest bid by a predetermined percentage.
- 1 16. The method of claim 14, wherein the reward rule comprises a condition that
2 the bid from the bidder is greater than the greatest bid by a predetermined currency
3 value.

1 17. The method of claim 1, wherein the reward rule comprises a condition that the
2 bid is a first received bid.

1 18. The method of claim 17, wherein the reward is a currency value corresponding
2 to a value of the bid.

1 19. The method of claim 17, wherein the reward corresponds to a difference
2 between the bid and a greatest bid.

1 20. The method of claim 1, in which the establishing step comprises:
2 establishing the reward rule to include a condition that a greatest bid is at least
3 equal to a predetermined value; and the method further comprising:
4 receiving a second bid for the product from a second bidder, wherein
5 the second bid is the greatest bid; and
6 determining whether the greatest bid is at least equal to the
7 predetermined value, whereby if the greatest bid is at least equal to the predetermined
8 value, the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

1 21. The method of claim 20, wherein the step of determining, based on the
2 reward rule further comprises:
3 determining, based on the reward rule, whether the second bidder is
4 qualified to receive a reward; and if the second bidder is qualified:
5 transmitting, to the second bidder, an indication that the second bidder
6 is qualified to receive the reward, whereby if the greatest bid is at least equal to the
7 predetermined value, the second bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

1 22. The method of claim 1, in which the establishing step further comprises:
2 establishing the reward rule including a condition that the bid exceed a prior
3 bid, the method further comprising:
4 receiving a prior bid, wherein the determining step further comprises:
5 determining whether the bid is greater than the prior bid; whereby if
6 the bid is greater than the prior bid, the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

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1 23. The method of claim 22, wherein the reward rule further includes a condition
2 that the bid exceed a prior bid by a predetermined value; and

3 wherein the step of determining whether the bid is greater than the prior bid
4 further comprises:

5 determining whether the bid is greater than the prior bid by a
6 predetermined value, whereby if the bid is greater than the prior bid by the
7 predetermined value, the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

1 24. The method of claim 22, wherein the prior bid is received from the bidder.

1 25. The method of claim 22, wherein the prior bid is received from a second
2 bidder.

1 26. The method of claim 25, wherein the bid is equal to the prior bid, and wherein
2 the bid and the prior bid are a highest bid.

1 27. The method of claim 26, further comprising:
2 comparing a participation history of the bidder and the second bidder; and
3 awarding the product based on the comparison.

1 28. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 establishing the reward rule including a condition that the bidder submit a
3 progressive bid that is greater by at least a predetermined value than a prior bid;
4 receiving the prior bid from the bidder; and wherein the determining step
5 further comprises:
6 determining whether the bid is greater than the prior bid by at least the
7 predetermined value; whereby if the bid is greater than the prior bid by at least the
8 predetermined value, the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

1 29. The method of claim 28, wherein the predetermined value corresponds to a
2 percentage of the prior bid.

1 30. The method of claim 1, in which the establishing step further comprises:

establishing the reward rule including a condition that the bidder submits a predetermined number of bids, the method further comprising:

receiving at least one prior bid from the bidder; and wherein the determining step further comprises:

determining whether a number of bids from the bidder, including the bid and the at least one prior bid, is at least equal to the predetermined number of bids, whereby if the number of bids is at least equal to the predetermined number of bids, the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

31. The method of claim 1, in which the establishing step further comprises:

establishing the reward rule including a condition that a bidder submit at least two bids within a predetermined amount of time; the method further comprising:

receiving a second bid from the bidder; and wherein the determining step further comprises:

determining whether the bid and the second bid were received within the predetermined amount of time.

32. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

measuring a time between the bid and a previous bid from a second bidder; and in which the establishing step further comprises:

establishing the reward rule including a condition that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward when the time is greater than a predetermined value; and wherein the determining step further comprises:

determining whether the time between the bid and the previous bid is greater than the predetermined value.

33. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

measuring a time between the bid and a previous bid from a second bidder; and in which the establishing step further comprises:

establishing the reward rule including a condition that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward when the time is greater than a predetermined value; and wherein the determining step further comprises:

determining whether the time between the bid and the previous bid is less than the predetermined value.

1 43. The method of claim 42, wherein the payment is determined from a parallel
2 auction.

1 44. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 receiving, from the bidder, a payment to extend the auction session.

1 45. The method of claim 44, wherein the payment is determined from a parallel
2 auction.

1 46. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 terminating the reward if a higher bid is received from a second bidder.

1 47. The method of claim 1, wherein the reward rule includes a condition that the
2 reward be issued randomly.

1 48. The method of claim 1, wherein the reward to be offered is determined based
2 on at least one of:
3 the bidder's participation history, the bid spread, the product, a statistical
4 likelihood that the bid will be a greatest bid, and the average highest bid historically
5 submitted for a similar product.

1 49. The method of claim 1, wherein the receiving step includes:
2 receiving an encrypted indication of a time the bid was transmitted.

1 50. A method for providing a penalty to a bidder participating in an auction, the
2 method comprising:
3 identifying a product subject to bidding during an auction session;
4 receiving a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction session;
5 determining, based on a penalty rule, whether the bidder is to receive a
6 penalty; and if the bidder is to receive the penalty:
7 transmitting, to the bidder, an indication that the bidder is to receive
8 the penalty.

1 51. The method of claim 50, wherein the penalty rule comprises a condition that
2 the bid is less than a current high bid.

1 52. The method of claim 50, wherein the penalty comprises making the bidder
2 ineligible to continue participating in the auction session.

1 53. The method of claim 50, wherein the penalty rule comprises a condition that
2 the bid is less than a predetermined value.

1 54. A method for participating in an auction session, comprising:
2 receiving an identification of a product subject to bidding during an auction
3 session;
4 transmitting a bid for the product to an auctioneer during the auction session;
5 and
6 receiving a reward in response to the bid.

1 55. The method of claim 54, further comprising:
2 receiving the product in response to the bid.

1 56. The method of claim 54, wherein the product is a service.

1 57. The method of claim 54, wherein the transmitting step is conducted over one
2 of a telecommunications network and the Internet.

1 58. The method of claim 54, wherein the transmitting step includes:
2 transmitting the bid with an encrypted indication of a time the bid was
3 transmitted.

1 59. A method for participating in an auction session, comprising:
2 receiving an identification of a product subject to bidding during an auction
3 session;
4 transmitting a bid for the product to an auctioneer during the auction session;
5 and
6 receiving a penalty in response to the bid.

1 60. A computer data signal embodied in a carrier wave comprising a segment
2 having computer processing instructions for notifying a bidder that the bidder is
3 qualified to receive a reward in response to a previous bid submitted during an auction
4 session.

1 61. An apparatus for providing a reward to a bidder participating in an auction,
2 comprising:
3 means for identifying a product subject to bidding during an auction session;
4 means for receiving a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction
5 session;
6 means for determining, based on a reward rule, whether the bidder is qualified
7 to receive a reward, and
8 means for transmitting, to the bidder, an indication that the bidder is qualified
9 to receive the reward.

1 62. An apparatus for providing a reward to a bidder participating in an auction,
2 comprising:
3 a storage device; and
4 a processor connected to the storage device,
5 the storage device storing a program for controlling the processor; and
6 the processor operative with the program to:
7 identify a product subject to bidding during an auction session;
8 receive a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction session;
9 determine, based on a reward rule, whether the bidder is qualified to
10 receive a reward, and if the bidder is qualified:
11 transmit, to the bidder, an indication that the bidder is qualified to
12 receive the reward.

1 63. A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for
2 implementing a method for providing a reward to a bidder participating in an auction,
3 the method comprising:
4 identifying a product subject to bidding during an auction session;
5 receiving a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction session;

determining, based on a reward rule, whether the bidder is qualified to receive a reward, and if the bidder is qualified:

transmitting, to the bidder, an indication that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

64. An apparatus for providing a penalty to a bidder participating in an auction, comprising:

means for identifying a product subject to bidding during an auction session;

means for receiving a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction

session;

means for determining, based on a penalty rule, whether the bidder is to receive a penalty; and

means for transmitting, to the bidder, an indication that the bidder is to receive the penalty.

65. An apparatus for providing a penalty to a bidder participating in an auction, comprising:

a storage device; and

a processor connected to the storage device,

the storage device storing a program for controlling the processor; and

the processor operative with the program to:

identify a product subject to bidding during an auction session;

receive a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction session;

determine, based on a penalty rule, whether the bidder is to receive a penalty; and if the bidder is to receive the penalty:

transmit, to the bidder, an indication that the bidder is to receive the penalty.

66. A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for implementing a method for providing a penalty to a bidder participating in an auction, the method comprising:

identifying a product subject to bidding during an auction session;

receiving a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction session;

6 determining, based on a penalty rule, whether the bidder is to receive a
7 penalty; and if the bidder is to receive the penalty:
8 transmitting, to the bidder, an indication that the bidder is to receive
9 the penalty

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